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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: TFGG01: UNION OF SOLDIERS' MOTHERS SAYS GOR SHOULD
HAVE ACTED SOONER IN SOUTH OSSETIA

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Alice G. Wells for reason
s 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Valentina Melnikova of the Moscow Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee told us August 14 that her organization's only criticism of Russia's conduct on the South Ossetia conflict is that it waited too long to help the peacekeepers. She said the GOR should have intervened in South Ossetia when Georgia started shelling parts of the breakaway province, and should not have waited until Georgia invaded to send in military assistance.

¶2. (C) Melnikova told us there was little reliable information about events in South Ossetia available, but she agreed with MOD figures that 74 Russian soldiers died and many more were wounded. She said the troops were well-commanded and the assault was well-executed. Her office has gotten numerous calls from families concerned for their sons' safety; most callers were told to call the MOD hotline to find out information.

¶3. (C) Melnikova had many harsh words for Saakashvili and blamed him personally for civilian deaths. She called herself a "peaceful person," but said she fully supported the "our boys at the front."

Comment

¶4. (C) Melnikova's comments reflect the staunch support that Russia's military attack on Georgia enjoys throughout Russian society. Her NGO is distinguished by its traditionally critical views of military operations and transparency.
RUBIN